

What exactly is a “complaint”?

A complaint is a request for assistance regarding dissatisfaction about ESRD issues including but not limited to care, treatment, or providers.

What is a “grievance”?

A grievance is a request for an investigation of a complaint about a possible risk to the health, safety, or well-being of a patient; or a situation where the patient is unnecessarily at high-risk.

Who can file a complaint/grievance?

ANYONE. Patients, family members, staff, or anyone else who has concerns about a dialysis facility or transplant center. It doesn't matter if you are on hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, or received a transplant. It is always important to let someone know you have concerns about your medical care.

What do I do about my complaint?

The decision of what to do is always up to you—the patient. Here are a couple of things you can consider trying to resolve the issue on your own:

- Try talking to someone at the dialysis or transplant facility where you receive care. Some people on your health care team you can talk to are: social workers, nurses, doctors, and clinic managers.
- Submit a facility grievance. Each facility has its own grievance process, which explains what to do with your complaint within the dialysis facility or transplant center.
- Be sure to keep a copy of any grievance forms you file.

Why should I tell anyone?

- *To make sure safe care is being provided.* The most important purpose of complaints is to protect you and other patients. All dialysis facilities and transplant centers are required to follow basic guidelines for treatment under Medicare. When a facility is not following these guidelines, it is important that someone know about it so that the situation can be improved.
- *To work through a problem.* Every patient and staff member has a different personality, so it's possible that there may be a communication problem at some point. If a problem is left alone, it can potentially become worse. By talking to someone about your concern, there is a chance it will make you feel more comfortable and improve communication between staff and patients.
- *To help others.* By telling someone about your concern it might help other people as well.

What if I don't feel comfortable talking to the staff?

You have two other options for dealing with your concern that do not require talking with the staff at the dialysis facility or transplant center. You can either contact Southern California Renal Disease Council, Inc., ESRD Network 18 at the address shown on the front of this brochure or the California State Survey Agency at the address below:

State of California
Dept. of Health Services Licensing and Certification
1800 Third Street, Suite 210 (P.O. Box 942732)
Sacramento, CA 94234-7320
Toll free: (800) 236-9747

What do the Network and the State Survey Agency do?

The Network and the State Agency have different responsibilities, but work together to make sure that dialysis facilities and transplant centers are providing high quality and safe care.

How can ESRD Network 18 assist with my complaint?

The Network acts as a neutral third party to help mediate concerns. Mediation means that we will listen to both sides and try to assist each in reaching the best possible outcome.

Some things we can do:

- Investigate a complaint/grievance
- Contact your dialysis facility or transplant center to discuss your complaint/grievance
- Educate the staff and/or you about issues related to the complaint/grievance
- Refer the complaint/grievance to another agency (i.e. State Survey Agency)
- Visit the dialysis facility or transplant center to provide mediation
- Advocate for patient rights
- Provide information on Medicare

Some things we cannot do:

- Request a dialysis facility, transplant center, or physician to accept a patient
- Request that a specific staff member provide your care
- Change or get involved in facility or personnel policies and procedures
- Get a physician or staff member “fired” or transferred

What does the State Survey Agency do?

The State Agency’s main responsibility is to inspect healthcare facilities in order to make sure that patients are receiving safe care. Like the Network, they also receive and investigate complaints. The State Agency is guided and funded by Medicare, which requires that all healthcare facilities follow basic guidelines. The state surveyors use these guidelines during routine inspections, investigations, and when licensing a new facility.

Who should I call?

The decision of who to call is always up to the patient. The Network has an experienced dialysis nurse on staff, Monday thru Friday, to listen to your complaint and assist in mediation with your ESRD healthcare provider or in filing a complaint or grievance. When you contact the State Survey Agency, a trained professional will listen to your complaint and decide whether an *immediate* investigation is needed.

How will I know the outcome of my complaint?

Both agencies will provide you with follow-up in writing or by phone on the outcome of your complaint/grievance. If you choose not to give your name or if you ask that you not be contacted, neither agency will be able to provide you with feedback.

Should you need more information about the Network complaint or grievance process, talk with your social worker, contact us directly or visit our website at www.esrdnetwork18.org.

What if a group of patients has a complaint?

Each patient will need to contact the Network or State Agency individually, so that each patient’s health, safety, and well-being are taken into account.

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Complaints and Grievances



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A Guide for Patients and Families

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